



Studies in Sociology of Science
Vol. 6, No. 6, 2015, pp. 103-107
DOI:10.3968/8064

ISSN 1923-0176 [Print]
ISSN 1923-0184 [Online]
www.cscanada.net
www.cscanada.org

The Processing of Chinese Translation Version for the Novel *The Great Gatsby* About the Rhetorical Devices

WANG Wenjing^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Foreign Languages, Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities, Tongliao, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 24 September 2015; accepted 4 November 2015
Published online 26 December 2015

Abstract

In English when translating the figures of speech, it is hard to express the meaning in the translated target language because of the difference between different language systems. On one hand, retaining the figurative speech of the original works is faithful to the original works because the translation for the literature works is limited by the original works and the translators can not translate freely. On the other hand, it is necessary to keep the style of the original works, which are helpful for the readers to know the original writer's use of the figurative speeches. The paper mainly deals with the figures of speech in translating including metaphor, exaggeration, euphemism, understatement, pun.

Key words: The rhetorical device; The figure of speech; Processing; Exaggeration; Euphemism; Understatement; Pun

Wang, W. J. (2015). The Processing of Chinese Translation Version for the Novel *The Great Gatsby* About the Rhetorical Devices. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 6(6), 103-107. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sss/article/view/8064> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/8064>

INTRODUCTION

In English when translating the figures of speech, it is hard to express the meaning in the translated target language because of the difference between different language systems. Such as the figurative speech, alliteration, like the phrase "friend and foe" which can not be expressed in

Chinese, and it can be translated into Chinese "敌与友". Of course, in Chinese the figurative speech, antithesis, is hard to express in English. On one hand retaining the figurative speech of the original works is faithful to the original works because the translation for the literature works is limited by the original works and the translators can not translate freely. On the other hand, it is necessary to keep the style of the original works, which are helpful for the readers to know the original writer's use of the figurative speeches. This phenomenon often exists in the translation version. Dealing with the figurative speeches of the original works embodies the translator's creative labor. So the paper is mainly about the different processing of the rhetorical devices of the original works in translation versions and compares the advantages and disadvantages.

1. DEALING WITH METAPHOR

In the Chinese and foreign literary works the figurative speech is a frequently-used rhetorical device by the writers. In English the figurative speech includes simile and metaphor. There are also some people who put synecdoche into the figurative speech. For example in the book *English Rhetoric Appreciation* Jiakai Fan classified the figurative speech into three varieties: simile, metaphor and synecdoche. In English generally speaking metaphor and simile are the two different forms of the figurative speech. According to the standard of classification of figurative speech in the English rhetorical devices the paper analyzed simile and metaphor of the novel *The Great Gatsby* with examples. Actually the figurative speech is to find the similarity between two different things to form isomorphic relationship and set up a certain bridge. The figurative speech is made up of three parts which are tenor, vehicle and medium. The bigger the difference between the tenor and the vehicle is, the newer it is, the stronger the expressive force is. Because of the works translation the translators are often misty between

simile and metaphor in dealing with the figurative speech. Metaphor is often translated into simile. For example, “They were both in white and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house.”

Wu’s translation: 她们俩身穿白衣, 衣裙在风中飘荡, 好像她们乘坐气球绕着房子飞了一圈刚被风吹回来似的。

Cheng’s translation: 仿佛刚刚乘坐热气球飞了一圈, 才刚刚坐定。

The above example with simile was literally translated in the translation version which still shows the rhetorical device of the original works. So at the same time it can be said that there are a lot of primitive and common things in humans’ languages. The simile in the figurative speech especially embodies this common point. In Cheng’s translation he highlighted the use of simile deleting the details. About the processing of metaphor in the novel in most situations it was translated into simile. It is much easier for the target language learners to understand. Another example, Her voice sang: It’s romantic, isn’t it Tom?”

Wu’s translation: 她的声音像唱歌一般, “很浪漫, 是不是, 汤姆?”

Cheng’s translation: 她自己的声音也美好得好像是在唱歌: “真浪漫, 是不是, 汤姆?”

Here the word “sang” refers to Daisy’s remarks which is like a song. In the original English works it is used as metaphor. If it is still translated as metaphor, it can be misunderstood. For after the word sang it is the content of a direct speech. If it is translated directly, readers may misunderstand that Daisy was singing. The song words are “It’s romantic, isn’t it Tom?” It is obvious that it is inconsistent with the real situation of the original works. Meanwhile Daisy’s remarks have the meaning of pun.

Romantic is not only the praise for the beautiful scenery outside the window but also the irony for the matter of Tom answering the old mistress’ call. It can show Daisy’s dissatisfaction and envy. Certainly there are some translation examples to convert metaphor into the ordinary language just for the target language readers’ comprehension. For example, “That’s what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a...”

Wu’s translation: “这是我的报应, 嫁给这么个粗野的男人, 一个又粗又大又笨拙的汉子”

Cheng’s translation: “都怪我嫁了个粗笨的男人, 典型的四肢发达”。

In the sentence the structure of a brute of a man is a fixed metaphor in which man is directly called brute. But in Chinese there is no corresponding structure. The literal meaning of English is “man like a livestock”. It may be considered a little bit crude to translate it into “像畜生一样的男人”. Facing the guests wife called her husband like that, it was improper. Therefore in the

two translation versions in order to reduce the semantics both are translated into “粗野的男人” which became a common language. The both form a descriptive relation. But the expression is weaker than the original works because Daisy was complaining her husband hurt her figure and she was unpleasant. Connected with the context of the first sentence was used the cleft structure “but you did do it” which shows that Daisy was still equipollent. Simile should be dealt with flexibly according to the actual situation which can not be translated according to the figurative speech simile. Sometimes it would cause appreciation obstacle if it was translated literally. Compare the following sentence about how to process simile. “But we heard it,” insisted Daisy, surprising me by opening up again in a flower-like way.

Cheng’s translation: “可是我们已经听说了,” 我惊讶地看见她的脸上又露出了笑容。

Wu’s translation: “可是我们听说了。” 黛西坚持说, 使我感到惊讶地是她又像花朵一样绽开了。

In translating simile here Wu adopted the direct translation. “像花朵一样绽开了” does not match the situation of “黛西坚持说”. It was as if Daisy had insisted something stubbornly. So her expression may be serious enough and even unpleasant. What on earth is the information of “像花朵一样绽开了”? Is it in full bloom? Or is it beam with joy? The decode here is not so full. On the contrary compared with Cheng’s translation, he missed the word “insisted” which resolved Daisy’s persistence skillfully. Connected with the context here, Daisy’s persistence is obvious not to defend a fact or truth. She was only to confirm whether he was engaged facing Nick. Therefore it is possible to omit it without translation. From the sentence “but we have heard” this sentence itself contains pale insistence. It is wise for Cheng not to translate simile. It is effective to avoid the comprehension puzzle in the translated language if the simile is translated literally. Furthermore in the whole novel the writer used flower to make a simile for Daisy. So it is not a marvelous simile. It is feasible not to translate it. The direct implication of simile is more precise and clearer than Wu’s translation.

2. DIFFERENT PROCESSING ABOUT EXAGGERATION IN THE TRANSLATED LANGUAGE

Exaggeration is the rhetorical device both in English and in Chinese. In English it is called hyperbole. Generally it is not hard to translate and understand. In Chinese there are a lot of expressions like “白发三千丈”, “飞流直下三千尺”, “力拔山兮气盖世”. In English there is the similar expressions like “millions of thanks”. In the novel *The Great Gatsby* there is some examples about hyperbole. For example, her family is one aunt about a thousand years old.

Cheng's translation: 她那个足有一千岁的姑母。

Wu's translation: 她家里只有一个七老八十的姑妈。

In this example the purpose of exaggeration is to highlight the old age and sophistication of Jordan's aunt. Two translation versions all show this meaning. Cheng's translation is literally translated and it seems rigid but it keeps the rhetorical device of hyperbole. The readers of the translated language are easier to apprehend and even smile to themselves. Although Wu's translation can also convey the meaning, “七老八十” belongs to the Chinese usage which can refer to the older man. The semantic association is obviously not richer than one thousand years old.

Another excellent example of hyperbole is like following.

I told her I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way east, and how a dozen people had sent their love through me.

“Do they miss me?” she cried ecstatically.

“The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore.”

“How gorgeous!” let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!”

Wu's translation: 我告诉她我到东部来的途中曾在芝加哥停留一天, 有十来个朋友都托我向她问好。 “他们想念我吗?” 她欣喜若狂地喊道。 “全城都凄凄惨惨, 所有的汽车都把左右轮涂上了黑漆当花圈, 沿着城北的湖边整夜哀声不绝于耳。” “太美了! 汤姆, 咱们回去吧。明天!”

Cheng's translation: 我告诉她, 我中途在芝加哥逗留了一天, 有十几个人让我代为转达他们对她的问候。 “他们有没有想我?” 她嚷道, 脸上挂着迷茫的表情。 “全城的人都在为你的离开而伤心, 所有的汽车左后轮都被漆成了黑色, 表示他们的哀伤的心情, 北岸的人们整夜哀叹。” “太好了, 咱们回去吧, 汤姆, 明天就启程!”

About this dialogue although there were differences towards the refinement of several individual words and the apprehension of the original works, they all expressed the rhetorical device of hyperbole in the original works to further show Daisy's character of vain, exaggeration and affectation. When Nick conveyed others' polite greetings, she exaggerated it an earthshaking affair and cried ecstatically, asking them whether they missed her. Nick's answer was so splendid and his compliment not only satisfied Daisy's vain but also teased and mocked at her vain. Cheng's translation is more definite extending the range of the sad men to the people and the car with stronger exaggeration and more emotion. It was no wonder that Daisy shouted that she would return tomorrow.

3. THE MARVELOUS ARRANGEMENT OF EUPHEMISM IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

It is explained in Chen Wangdao's book *The Origin of Rhetoric* that when speaking not to express the meaning

straightforwardly, only to imply with the reserved words, which is called indirect speech. There are about two main methods to make up of this rhetoric device. The first way is not to say the original thing only with the rest things to decorate. The second way is to express the meaning with the faint words. In English there is the rhetoric device of euphemism. Such as the phrase “pass away” to replace “die”. There are a lot of excellent translation examples in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. For example, in the first chapter when Nick visited Daisy, he met with Miss Baker. Daisy would like to contribute to a marriage. Miss Baker said goodbye in the following way when she heard Daisy was inquiring whether Nick was engaged or not. “Good night,” called Miss Baker from the stairs, “I haven't heard a word.”

Wu's translation: “明儿见,” 贝克小姐从楼梯上喊道, “我一个字也没听见。”

Here Miss Baker's words “I haven't heard a word” which is a nice way to be evasive. In fact she heard everything to show she was interested in this thing. Just because both in Chinese and English there was a rhetorical strategy. The effect of the direct translation is great and readers can apprehend it naturally. Another example: He informed me that he was in the “artistic game”, and I gathered later that he was a photographer and had made the dim enlargement of Mrs. Wilson's mother which hovered like an ectoplasm on the wall.

Wu's translation: 他告诉我他是“吃艺术饭的”, 后来我才明白他是摄影师, 墙上挂的威尔逊太太的母亲那副像一片胚叶似的模糊不清的放大的照片就是他摄影的。

In the original works Mackey used the phrase “in the artistic game” to call his profession in an euphemism way. This was the writer's intention to use this kind of rhetorical device on purpose to satirize Mr. Mackey's craft. The translator used his brains much to translate. If it was translated literally into “从事艺术学习” according to the literal meaning, it seems overimplicit and even puzzled by the readers of the target language. It is improper to connect with the context. The translator marvelously translated it into “吃艺术饭的” which either embodies the writer's ironic intention or meanwhile points out Mr. Mackey's profession. The expression is somewhat reserved. There is a loomed aesthetic effect. If it were translated into photographer directly, the artistic effect would be less. Therefore how to deal with the same rhetoric device can show the translators' translation level in the translated target language.

4. DEALING WITH UNDERSTATEMENT

In English the use of understatement is frequent while in Chinese there is no corresponding rhetorical device. For example in the oral language people often say “not bad”. Professor Fan Jiakai concluded it into two kinds: opposite saying instead of affirmative saying; weak

expression instead of strong expression. At the same time the difference between euphemism and understatement is pointed out. The glorifying euphemism is obviously different from the understatement. Understatement does not need to beautify positively. The fuzzy euphemism is intersectional with the weak expression replacing of strong expression in the understatement. The intersectional point lies in tone down and being fuzzy. There are more translation examples in the novel. For example: Twenty miles from the city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay.

Wu's translation: 离城二十英里路, 有一对奇大无比的鸡蛋般的半岛, 外形一模一样, 中间隔着一道小溪。

Cheng's translation: 在距离市区二十英里的地方, 有一对卵形岛屿, 被一个净水分隔开来。

This is the narrative spokesman Nick introducing the geographical situation of the nearby the long island. The eastern island and the western island were separated by a narrow and long bay. The writer did not choose the ordinary vocabulary like small or little but chose the word courtesy to express. The purpose is to show the bay is so small and the language is lower, which forms the stronger contrasting relationship with the former word enormous. Cheng did not care more for the rhetorical device of the original works and translated it into the common speech “一个净水” which is not only out of the original works but also does not conform to the habits of Chinese expression. Although Wu could not show the original works' intention in his translation, at least the expressive meaning is accurate for it is hard to find more suitable words in Chinese. So it can be seen that in another language system the rhetorical device is impossible to be marvelous in the process of translation. Another example: I lived at West Egg, the ... well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them.

Wu's translation: 我住在西卵, 这是俩个地方中比较不那么时髦的一个, 不过这是个非常肤浅的标签, 不足以表示二者之间那种离奇古怪而又很不吉祥的对比。

Cheng's translation: 我住的地方是西卵, 这是两个卵形岛屿中不太时髦的一个, 不过要确切地说出他们之间的奇特甚至是不吉利的差异, 用“时髦”这个词是极为肤浅的。

Here in the original works the writer did not employ the words like great, remarkable or enormous to render positively but used the understatement to state not a little showing the writer's careful choice of the words. In Chinese generally it is translated into “很大的”, “非常的”或“不小的”。Wu's translation retains the character of the original English works. Cheng adopted the indirect translation and ignored the original writer's rhetorical intention. It is reasonable for Wu to translate it into “很”。Considering the collocation with the following word sinister, if the original style were remained, the translation words are not fluent in reading. The changing

of the rhetorical device is the result of the writers' rearrangement. Another example “I can't complain,” answered Wilson unconvincingly.

Wu's translation: “还可以,” 威尔逊缺乏说服力地回答。

Cheng's translation: “说的过去”, 威尔逊的回答明显是在敷衍。

“I can't complain” in English it obviously belongs to the negative expression replacing the positive expression. If it were translated directly into “我不能抱怨什么”, it seems improper. In English it often uses the opposite expression to replace the positive expression. In Chinese there is also the corresponding expression. Here it can be translated into “无可挑剔”或“没的说” the similar meaning. No matter how to deal with the words, more consideration about how to translate properly and lively.

5. THE CHANGE OF PUN

In English the pun refers to homonym and homophone. Pun has two kinds: homophonic pun and semantic pun. Look at the examples of pun in the novel. “The dog? That dog's a boy”. “It's a bitch,” said Tom decisively, “Here's your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it.”

Wu's translation: “那只狗? 那只狗是雄的。”“是只母狗,” 汤姆斩钉截铁地说, “给你钱, 去再买十只狗。”

In English the phenomena of polysemy is more popular. Taking advantage of the more meanings often can create nifty or delicate pun. When in translating Chinese, because of lack of corresponding Chinese words, it is hard to reshuffle the pun technique in the original works. The word bitch can mean “母狗”“坏女人”“淫妇”。On the surface Tom was talking about the dog, but in fact he was speaking of man. He did not approve of Mrs. Wilson's buying dog. For he came to New York to make an appointment with her, he did not come for buying dogs. It can be felt from Tom's sarcastic tone “go and buy ten more dogs.” It is easy to distinguish the gender of the dog. The dog seller has already made it clear that “it was a boy”. Tom said it was a bitch on purpose, implying to scold Mrs. Wilson with the sarcastic intention. It is a pity that this kind of implied pun has no corresponding word with bitch. Only the people who can understand English appreciate the beauty of this sentence. In a certain sense the literature works have a certain resistance translation. Another example, the same word refers to another thing but on surface speaks one thing in expressing meaning. Her voice sang: “It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?”

Wu's translation: 她的声音像唱歌一般, “很浪漫, 是不是, 汤姆?”

Cheng's translation: 她自己的声音也美好得像是在唱歌: “真浪漫, 是不是, 汤姆?”

When Daisy heard her husband making a call with his mistress and happened to listen to a nightingale singing on the lawn, Daisy asked her husband Tom this

meaningful sentence after she returned to the room. Here the word “her” either can interpret that nightingale or Tom’s mistress. At the same time on the surface Daisy was saying the romantic scenery outside the room with the sentence “It’s romantic, isn’t it, Tom?” in fact she was blaming Tom and insinuated him and his mistress to the small talk expressing her unhappiness. Considering the guests were present Daisy would not like to quarrel with Tom positively so she used pun to beat about the bush. Another example in the seventh chapter: As Tom took up the receiver the compressed heat exploded into sound and we were listening to the portentous chords of Mendelssohn’s Wedding March from the ballroom below.

Cheng’s translation: 汤姆刚刚抓起听筒, 就听见楼上传来一阵音乐声, 仿佛是热气爆发出来的, 我们辨认出那是门德尔松的《婚礼进行曲》, 这个时候听见这首曲子或许预示着什么。

Wu’s translation: 汤姆一拿起话筒, 那憋得紧紧的热气突然爆发出声音, 这时我们听到门德尔松的《婚礼进行曲》惊心动魄的和弦从底下舞厅里传上来。

The word “portentous” in the original English sentence can be used as pun which belongs to polysemy with Chinese meanings “不祥之兆”“怪异的”“自命不凡”. So it could be interpreted as “怪异的音乐声” or “不祥的音乐声”. In the two translation examples Cheng’s translation embodied a little and implicitly translated it into “预示着” while Wu translated it into “惊心动魄” which is hard to see the effect of the pun. Only the people who know better about English can feel the meaning of pun from the polysemy. The wedding of Daisy and Tom also was held on a warm day like this. When hearing the wedding song they should have been joyful about the past beautiful memory. After all that’s the beginning of their marriage life but at that moment the mind of the couple of Tom was complicated. Especially Tom felt Gatsby’s threatening and he was terribly upset ready to give a personal attack to Gatsby trying to knock him down. Here it not only shows the increasing tense but also makes people feel the words battle between Tom and Gatsby. Therefore if the translation version can highlight the use of the rhetorical devices in the original works it can express the

complicated and delicate feeling of the characters present. The translation version had better be changed in this way “汤姆一抓起听筒, 就听见楼下传来一阵怪异的音乐声, 仿佛是紧张的热气爆发出来的, 大家都听得出那是门德尔松的《婚礼进行曲》, 此时听见这首曲子或许让人感觉到有什么不祥之事要发生。”

In this way through the translation version of the two notions of the original word can be expressed. Maybe the readers of the translated target language can appreciate the meaning of pun dimly.

Another example “Jay Gatsby had broken up like glass against Tom’s malice, and the long secret extravaganza was played out.”

Wu’s translation: “杰伊盖茨比已经像玻璃一样在汤姆铁硬的恶意上碰得粉碎, 那出漫长的秘密狂想剧也演完了。”

Cheng’s translation: 杰伊盖茨比这个他自己创造出来的神话在和汤姆的较量中被打败了, 那个漫长的秘密的狂想曲也已经演奏完毕了。”

In this example “漫长的秘密狂想剧也演完了” not only refers to the ending of Gatsby’s banquet in his mansion but more implies the ending of Gatsby and Daisy’s love. Gatsby was so soppy that he gained Daisy’s grimness and plot.

REFERENCES

- Chang, Y. X. (2014). *American literature course in choreography*. Tianjin, China: Nankai University Publishing House.
- Cheng, H. (2004). *The Great Gatsby* (p.9). Chinese Overseas Publishing House
- Dong, X. W. (2013). *The aesthetic and art dictionary in the modern world*. Nanjing, China: Jiangsu Art Publishing House .
- Fitzgerald, F. S. (2013). *The Great Gatsby*. In J. H. Li (Trans.). Tianjin, China: Tianjin People’s Publishing House.
- Wu, N. K. (2010). *The Great Gatsby* (p.10). Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.
- Yu, N. (2001). *The American dream—Symbolism in the Great Gatsby*. Liaoning Normal University.